WTO meeting at Geneva

†*50. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a Minister level meeting of different WTO member countries held recently in Geneva concluded without arriving at any decision;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the specific issues on which discussions were held during the above said meeting;

(c) the stand of India on those issues during discussion; and

(d) the reasons for not arriving at any decision in that meeting?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. An informal meeting of 31 Ministers, including from India, was convened by the Director General, WTO, in Geneva between 29th June and 1st July, 2006. Domestic support and market access in Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) were discussed by the Ministers. However, convergence could not be achieved. A meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) of the WTO was also held on 1" July, 2006 wherein the DG was requested to conduct intensive and wide ranging consultations with a view to facilitating the establishment of modalities in Agriculture and NAMA, and to report back to the TNC as soon as possible. Following detailed consultations, the DG convened a meeting of the G-6 Ministers on 23 July 2006, which was followed by an informal TNC meeting on 24 July 2006. The DG reported that the gaps remain too wide, and that there was no option but to suspend the negotiations across the Round as a whole to enable serious reflection by participants to review the situation, examine available options and review positions.

(c) and (d) India emphasized that the specific and detailed proposals that have been made in domestic support and market access by the G-20, and on Special Products (SPs) and the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) by the G-33, would ensure a final outcome that was

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

consistent with the agreed negotiating mandate for substantial and effective reductions in trade-distorting domestic support, and substantia! improvements in market access particularly for products of export interest to developing countries. India stated that the self-designation of an appropriate number of SPs, an effective and operable SSM for safeguarding the vulnerable farm communities and proportionately lower tariff reduction commitments must be integral to the final outcome on agriculture. In NAMA, India and the other NAMA-11 countries emphasized the need to ensure "less than full reciprocity in reduction commitments" for developing countries coupled with appropriate flexibilities to manage adjustment costs and address development needs. Simultaneously, India was proactive in its outreach to other developing countries. The Joint Statement issued by the G-20, G-33, ACP Group, LDCs, African Group, Small Vulnerable Economies, NAMA-11, Cotton-4 and CARICOM agreed that the Doha Development Agenda must address on a priority basis, in a meaningful and comprehensive manner, the development needs and concerns of developing countries.

Since the gaps in the positions of the major parties could not be narrowed, a broad convergence could not be arrived at.

Empioyment cards uner NREG Act

*51. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the district-wise details of the number of BPL persons and the number of Employment Cards issued under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, since its inception till June 30, 2006, showing separately the number of persons becoming eligible to and who received wage among them, date-wise;

(b) the details of daily wage rate fixed in respective districts;

(c) the criteria fixed, if any, for ascertaining bonafide of applicants and procedure being followed for their verification;

(d) the procedure being followed for disbursal of wages to the beneficiaries; and